



## Exchange of good practices on gender equality

### **Awareness raising activities to fight violence against women and girls**

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## Comments paper - Ireland

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# Comments on Ireland, UK and Greece

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## 1. Introduction

There is a 30 year history in Ireland of women's movement activism, formation of associations, legislative reform and service provision to women victims of violence be it rape or intimate partner violence. More than four out of ten women reported some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime in a 2002 national survey. Over a quarter of men interviewed reported some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime in the same study.<sup>1</sup>

In the first phase of the late 1980s-mid 1990s, the emphasis was on awareness raising that an issue of violence existed, lobbying of government to support the opening of women's refuges and highlighting the devaluation of domestic violence cases in the Courts<sup>2</sup> and weaknesses in prosecuting rape.<sup>3</sup> A first rape crisis centre was opened in 1979. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993) was significant in spurring on actions to recognise violence against women as a public policy theme as was the UN Fourth World Conference and Platform of Action held in Beijing (1995). Women's Aid in Ireland called for a specific national awareness campaign in 1995 to combat myths and prejudices about domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>

In the second phase from the mid-90s to 2001 greater emphasis was placed on public-private formations such as Task Forces, Regional Committees under Health Authorities and Steering Committees (1997) and changing laws (Domestic Violence Act, 1996). Analysis was generated with more subtle nuances, more in-depth appreciation of the complexity of the issues, better technical competence in handling monitoring and data and an awareness that some of the proposed reforms were not working. The European Women's Lobby was influential when it established an observatory on violence against women and encouraged transnational exchanges of practices.<sup>5</sup> Irish involvement in the European Daphne Initiatives and Programmes opened up the sector to new ideas, though that did not imply that they were adopted in Ireland. The Council of Europe was influential in standard setting and data monitoring.

In the decade of the 2000, there was a definite shift from some not-for-profit organisations towards highlighting trafficking among women - migrants in particular - with the perhaps unforeseen consequence of appearing to 'racialise' the thematic of prostitution and ignoring the issue of children<sup>6</sup>. Indeed much of the public preoccupation of the decade in terms of violence against women and girls was transfixed by the revelations of mass-scale sexual, physical and emotional abuse of

<sup>1</sup> H. McGee et alia (2002) The SAVI Report -Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin.

<sup>2</sup> See argument of J. Fagan (1996) The Criminalisation of Domestic Violence: Promises and Limits, National Institute of Justice, US. An NIJ Research Report.

<sup>3</sup> Author's review of documents of the period.

<sup>4</sup> Kelleher, P. O'Connor, M. (1995) *Making the Links – Towards an integrated strategy for the elimination of violence against women in intimate relationships with men*, Women's Aid, Dublin.

<sup>5</sup> EWL (2001) *Towards a Common European Framework to Monitor Progress in Combating Violence Against Women*, Brussels supported by Daphne Initiative.

<sup>6</sup> Conroy, P. (2004) *Trafficking in unaccompanied minors – Ireland*, IOM, Dublin.

children- boys and girls - in institutions of the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> Almost 1,000 adults came forward to give testimony to the Confidential Committee of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse. Many had and have ruined lives.

Successful networking of women's refuges across Ireland accompanied recognition by Government that reducing violence against women was entitled to a more strategic approach. This opened phase 3. In 2007 a national office to prevent domestic, sexual and gender-based violence was established called Cosc. The Office was charged with, amongst other goals, raising awareness across Ireland of all kinds of gender based violence. The Submissions to the National Strategy on awareness-raising were focussed and detailed; proposing a far greater sophistication of approach than had been up to then attempted.<sup>8</sup> This was manifest in the publication of the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014*. The principles underpinning any Awareness Campaign on Violence have been agreed by a National Steering Committee on Violence against Women.

The Cosc national public awareness campaign '*Your Silence Feeds the Violence*' started in January 2009 with a major campaign across radio, billboards and online. The campaign has been continued by the distribution by Cosc with NGOs of A4 size posters to Government Departments (Ministries) public offices, such as police stations and court offices, and to support services. The campaign aims to raise awareness in the milieu around the victim that they play an important role in the continuation or cessation of crimes, to inform witnesses on how to take safe and appropriate action and increase awareness of the availability of services.

A major shift in thinking has been:

- The decision to move the focus of awareness campaigns away from a concentration on the victim to a focus on the perpetrator and bystander and to consider awareness-raising a form of prevention.<sup>9</sup>
- The use of professional communications expertise by Cosc.
- To base communications on research evidence which revealed that many people are aware of domestic violence and aware that it is a crime.
- To engage with bystanders and witnesses to domestic and sexual violence.

In addition, efforts in specific campaigns were made to combat the myth that violence only takes place in poor/working class contexts.

A series of posters entitled '*Your silence feeds the violence*' were published, a first batch of which were produced in a prison workshop by convicted sex offender prisoners. The Health Service Executive – an executive body under the Department (Ministry) of Health provides direct funding to frontline services to combat violence and is the principal source of funding for the voluntary bodies in the field.<sup>10</sup>

There were approximately 40 refuges and support services in 2010 as well as 20 Rape Crisis Centre services. Despite an absence of strategic regional considerations, there

<sup>7</sup> Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, *Final Report*, 2009, Dublin, volumes I-V.

<sup>8</sup> Cosc (2008) *National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender-based violence, Summary of Submissions to Cosc*, Department of Justice and Law Reform, Dublin, pp.4-7.

<sup>9</sup> Cosc (2011) *Awareness Raising Grant Scheme 2011 relating to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, Guidance Manual for Grant Applicants 2011*, Dublin.

<sup>10</sup> Health Service Executive (2011) *Annual Report 2010*, Appendix 1. Revenue Grants and Other Grants funded by the Government Departments/State Agencies.

appears to be at least one service in each of the 26 Administrative regions of Ireland, which are called 'Counties,' and more in centres of population. Some sparsely populated counties are grouped together for funding purposes, while in others (Donegal) several centres are funded given the long distances to travel across rural areas.

The National Network of Women's Refuges and Support Services which is called SAFE IRELAND carries out co-ordinated awareness raising campaigns among its membership of 20 Refuges and 21 support services to women victims of domestic violence.<sup>11</sup> They gather statistics systematically and function as a representative body. They estimated that 7,000 women availed of the services of their membership in 2009. In addition to funding services and networks in the field of domestic violence, state grants of €586,000 were also provided to Ruhama, a faith-based service for women who are or have been affected by prostitution or trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in 2010.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1. Funding services to combat gender-based violence by the Health Service Executive**

Year	Service	Funding in €
2010	20 Refuges and 25 support services including SAFE Ireland	14,790,586
2010	16 Rape Crisis Centres and Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)	4,845,348

Source: Communication from Health Service Executive to Cosc, 2012

The allocation to Cosc, which falls under the auspices of the Department of Justice was increased by about 9% for 2012. A reduction in grants by the HSE under the auspices of the Department of Health during the period 2009 to 2011 has been consistent with austerity measures applied by the Government. The reductions were strongly contested by several non-governmental organisations and networks.

There is an unrelenting increase in demand for services. For example the Rape Crisis Network Ireland reports that in 2010:

- 1,730 people took up counselling and support – a 9% increase since 2009.
- 15,289 helpline contacts were made – a 23% increase since 2009.
- 15,958 hours of counselling and support were provided.
- 1,309 hours of accompaniment were provided – a 65% increase in Rape Crisis Centre time since 2009.

## Some Awareness Actions and Campaigns in Ireland pertinent to UK and Greece

Each year Cosc promotes and funds a national information and awareness raising funding scheme, providing grants to NGOs to implement the campaign. The specific audience for 2012 is older people and professional carers. In 2011 some 58 organisations were awarded grants. A campaign to heighten student awareness of

<sup>11</sup> [www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)

<sup>12</sup> Data kindly provided by the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality.

violence and a coloured wrist- band campaign was organised with Unions of Students in Ireland. In addition to the Cosc national actions there have also been awareness raising campaigns:

- *The Other Half Campaign* ([www.theotherhalf.ie](http://www.theotherhalf.ie)) White Ribbon Campaign supported by Cosc and involving men's organisations working to encourage men to show opposition to violence, together with the Rape Crisis Network Ireland and SAFE Ireland 2011
- *2In2you* A radio campaign targeted at younger women in relationships which are potentially or actually abusive and organised by Womens Aid.2011. Radio advertisements appear to work well.
- *Medical and social work professionals awareness campaign* (2011) providing thousands of small wallet size cards to General Practitioners, Health Centres, Social Workers and Nurses to give to patients who show signs of sexual abuse or violence. The campaign is part funded by Cosc and combines SAFE Ireland with the Rape Crisis Network Ireland and contains three mobile phone applications for use in seeking help.
- *Womens Aid 16 Days of Action Opposing Violence against women* 25.11.11.-10.12.11.Slogan: 'One in five women.'
- *Schools Programmes* The Department of Education is considering including an anti-violence module in school curriculum. Research on *Awareness Raising of Domestic and Sexual Violence –A survey of post primary schools in Ireland*, will be published in 2012. Evidence from the study will guide future action on awareness-raising among young teenagers during 2012. Cosc is currently (2011) co-funding projects in schools in Carlow and adjacent Counties, Dublin and Kerry.<sup>13</sup> Cosc is currently co-funding sexual violence education in schools.
- Thirteen programmes addressing sexual perpetrators are being funded by Cosc.

## 2. Transferability Issues

The concept of transferability of good practices is problematic in itself.<sup>14</sup> Practices are usually specific to particular language, national or ethnic groups, to cultural and religious context and to historical and political circumstances. As a consequence practices often do not work well when plucked out of their framework.<sup>15</sup> Table 1 (below) shows that there are huge differences of scale and level of infrastructural development between Ireland, Greece and the UK. In addition, under the EU principle of subsidiarity, it may be argued that practices are a national-specific level of functioning best left to Member States. In contrast, perspectives, policies, methodologies, approaches, and conceptual frameworks are neither country-specific nor at odds with subsidiarity.

<sup>13</sup> Communication with Cosc, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> See also Discussion Paper UK 2012 page 7.

<sup>15</sup> See also EU Daphne (2010) *Feasibility Study to assess the possibilities opportunities and needs to standardise national legislation on violence against women, violence against children and sexual orientation violence*, Directorate General for Justice.

**Table 2 : Comparison of women's refuges and bed spaces in three European countries 2010<sup>16</sup>**

Country	Nos. Women Shelters	Nos. Bed places	Nos. Places Needed	Nos. Places Missing	Places per 10,000 inhabitants WAVE	Places per 10,000 Council of Europe
UK	685	3,800	5,043	1,153	0.77	0.60
Ireland	20	141	424	283	0.33	0.30
Greece	10	201	1,096	805	0.18	0.18
Council of Europe standard					1 place per 10,000 Inhabitants	

Source: Extracted from WAVE (2010) *Country Report 2010*, Vienna. Supported by EU DAPHNE, Austrian Ministry, City of Vienna and Philip Morris Foundation and Council of Europe (2010)

### **Greece: the timeline**

Awareness raising campaigns in Greece are at the initial stage – less than one year into a 3-year plan and it would be premature to draw strong conclusions at this point 2012.

### **Greece: Transferability of method of communication**

The decision in Greece to use TV advertising is of interest to state and NGO bodies in Ireland where a decision has been made by the National Office Cosc, following professional communications advice, not to use TV advertising, since local Radio communication had wider scope. The outcomes of the Greek TV campaign, given its cost, would be useful.

### **Greece: use of Reference Framework**

The use of the National Reference Framework Operational Programme 'Public Administration Reform' Axis 3 'Reinforcement of gender equality policies in the whole range of public action' is an interesting approach to financial provision of gender-based violence awareness raising campaigns. A more in-depth understanding of how this was achieved in relation to campaigns of violence against women would have relevance to Ireland.

## **Transferability UK – Ireland**

The importance of UK perspectives to Irish policy cannot be underestimated. There are more people of Irish origin in the UK than in Ireland. There is a common language and UK media are avidly and widely consumed in Ireland: radio, T.V. cinema and newspapers. Irish public servants and NGOs examine UK policies frequently to see what can be learned, what is emerging, what is working. Historically Irish women have sought refuge in England and Scotland. The reverse traffic is somewhat rarer.

The criteria for characteristics of prevention (p.16) approaches drawn from *End Violence against Women* (2011) is worth wider discussion in Ireland in that it neutralises the selection of projects on an arbitrary, random or nepotistic basis.

The UK characterisation of prevention as an overlooked aspect of attempts to address violence against women and the importance of gender orders (p.7) gender inequality and the presumed entitlement of many men with respect to women and girls, all strike a chord in the Irish context and suggest that violence against women awareness

<sup>16</sup> To read with caution since definitions and methods vary between studies.



campaigns need to be further mainstreamed across the board, which is presently a feature of the Irish National Strategy.

In contrast to Greece, the UK Discussion paper insists on the significance of reaching girls and boys as young as 13 years (*NIA* project and *This is Abuse* project). This is consistent with the UN Beijing Declaration Platform for Action (1995) in terms of the rights of the girl child. The account of the *NIA* project with young boys is of interest in several respects. The project approach towards young boys was simultaneously judgmental and caring. It enabled boys to safely discuss their attitudes to pornography and relationships in a framed environment while exhibiting zero tolerance towards violence.

### 3. Policy Debate

The delicate architecture of services, public-private partnerships, networks and representations constitutes a significant social capital which has accumulated over more than two decades. In contrast to financial and banking capital, property has not been accumulated, funds have been managed prudently, the sector attracts public confidence and the majority of service providers, planners and analysts are women.

A restructuring is taking place in the terrain of combating violence against women and gender based violence.<sup>17</sup>

From 2008 the economic crisis impacted seriously on the sector. The Health Service Executive under the Department of Health reduced its grants to individual services and its core funding to SAFE IRELAND was removed in 2011. The Rape Crisis Network Ireland lost their core funding, part of which was used for a detailed statistical monitoring. In both cases staff lost their jobs.<sup>18</sup>

There is no headline funding of awareness-raising in relation to violence against or within same sex partnerships, persons of different sexual orientation or transgendered persons.

The extent and relative prioritisation of violence experienced by men in intimate relationships with women is a subject of informal discussion among long standing women's organisations.

Despite research, there is no consensus as to what can be done about attrition among women and men in the legal prosecution of rape cases. The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014 includes a commitment to minimise attrition in domestic and sexual violence cases, where appropriate. Proposals for action to assist in the minimisation of attrition were developed by a Committee established by Cosc representing the state Justice Sector.

The fact that persons with mental illness, autism, intellectual disability or brain injury are not comprehensively protected from all forms of sexual assault is a matter of concern to some NGOs in the disability field. Sexual violence against persons with a disability has been selected as a priority theme for the year 2013.

<sup>17</sup> See SAFE Ireland (2011) *Domestic Violence in Ireland – A national overview of current system responses to women and children experiencing domestic violence*. Paper prepared for Minister Kathleen Lynch.TD.

<sup>18</sup> Council of Europe (2010) *Protecting women against violence Analytical study of the results of the third round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 on the protection of women against violence in Council of Europe Member States*, Strasbourg.

The rehousing of convicted sex offenders on their release from prison is a concern to the public authorities in the justice field and to local authorities. This is exacerbated by mass media focussing on the theme generating a 'moral panic' on the subject.

## **Policies Not Adequately Debated**

A consortium of development organisations have formed a Gender based Violence Consortium ([www.gbv.ie](http://www.gbv.ie)) which, amongst other actions, hosts exhibitions and provides a resource library to combat violence against women in the developing world of the South, the use of rape as an instrument of war, women in armed conflict and the treatment of sexual violence in EU asylum applications. The Department of Foreign Affairs is involved in this initiative. However the wider public are infrequently exposed to discussion of these themes.

### **Note:**

The author is grateful for a number of observations made to an earlier version of this paper by Cosc, by its sub-committee on public awareness (PASC), the Health Service Executive, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality. The opinions expressed in this paper are the author's alone.